

The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

December 2014

December 15 2014
RAS Membership Meeting

“ Mt. St. Helens, 34 years of Change”

Jay Galvin

Meeting begins at 7:00 PM.

Having grown up in the Longview area, Jay Galvin has always had a fascination with Mt. St. Helens. Fishing trips with his father and brother in the late spring on the Toutle River, camping out under the stars at Spirit Lake in the summer, or climbing to the summit of St. Helens with friends, Mr. Galvin's life was intertwined with the mountain.

That all changed in May of 1980. A pyroclastic flow emitted from Mt. St. Helens destroying 200 square miles of habitat in a matter of minutes. Since the eruption 34 years ago, the landscape around the mountain has changed drastically in some areas and hardly at all in others. Mr. Galvin will discuss what scientists are learning from this fragile landscape and what lies in store for the flora and fauna calling it home.



Photo by Jay Galvin



Since taking up photography 10 years ago, Jay has concentrated on sharing his photos to teach others about the natural world around them. Jay has given presentations to local Audubon chapters as well as REI and has several of his works in local hospitals, places of business and city collections. Mr. Galvin believes that volunteering time and money for habitat restoration are crucial for a sustainable bird population in our area. He is involved in habitat planning in the Green River Watershed.

Join us at 6:30 for our annual “Cookie Feed”!



**Rainier Audubon programs are held at Federal Way United Methodist Church,
29645 - 51st Ave. So. 98001 (in unincorporated Auburn)**

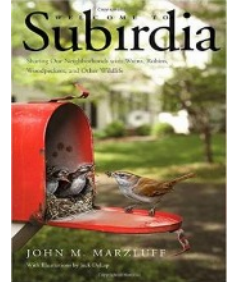
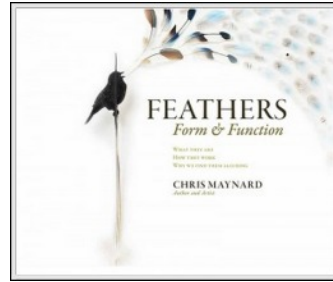
Directions: In Federal Way, take 320th St. EAST past The Commons, crossing over I-5 and Military Rd.

At 321st St, turn left. Stay on 321st as it becomes 51st Ave. So. Follow 51st Ave. to 296th. Church will be on your left.

Upcoming Programs

by Dale Meland

- **January 19** - Jim Danzenbaker - Jim spoke at one of our meeting with Jim Ulrich of Wild Birds Unlimited in Gig Harbor. Jim was with Kowa Optics at the time. He now leads birding trips and will be doing a program on South Georgia Island. Should be a good one.
- **February 16** - Chris Maynard will do a presentation entitled "Feather's Beauty and Biology." He did this program for Tahoma in late spring or early fall 2014. I heard it was pretty good. He also has a new book out called Feathers, Form and Function.
- **March 16** - Charlie Wright - The Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey (COASST) believes citizens of coastal communities are essential scientific partners in monitoring marine ecosystem health. By collaborating with citizens, natural resource management agencies and environmental organizations, COASST works to translate long-term monitoring into effective marine conservation solutions.
- **April 20** - John Marzluff - He and his wife did the Ravens in Maine program for us a few years back. He has a new book out called Welcome to Subirdia, which the Seattle Times recently did an article on. He will be doing a program based on that.
- **May 18** - Dan Streiffert - Yellowstone in Winter - from a tour in February, 2015.



Rainier Audubon Officers

President	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Vice President	Steve Feldman*	360-802-5211
Treasurer	Laura Lavington*	253-941-7372
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Board Member	Max Prinsen	425-432-9965
Board Member	Erin Wojewodski-Prinsen	425-432-9965
Board Member	Lisa Mesplay	253-946-3820
Board Member	Ed Stanton	206-870-3107
Publicity	Tom Sernka	253-529-8970

*Also serves as Board Member

Board meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Federal Way United Methodist Church, and are open to all members.

Volunteers Needed

- Door Greeters for Membership Meetings
- Articles for Heron Herald—send to dan_streiffert@hotmail.com
- Projection & Sound setup person for meetings.

RAS Mission Statement

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems and protect birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and biological diversity in South King County and the world we live in.

Seen & Heard by Calen Randall

What does an owl do before it eats its food? It preys! Why did the owl say, "Tweet Tweet?" Because it couldn't give a hoot! This November proved to be an owl-fully good month for interesting owl sightings. In mid-November, I saw a Short-eared Owl in the mountains between Mt. Vernon and Bellingham. Earlier in the week, Dan Streiffert captured an incredible image of a Barred Owl at Soos Creek. Alex Juchems had a Western Screech Owl in his back yard, and decided to strike up a conversation. Unfortunately, Alex chose to speak in the "Who cooks for you" tongue. Clearly Alex's impersonation of the Barred Owl was spot on, as the Screech Owl saw that the Juchem's house was ruled by a

Mom! Excitedly, my Mom ran after the owl to confirm the identification. She didn't have to wait long, as the owl swooped out of the tree again, making a last ditch effort to catch her huge squirrel tail. "No doubt about it," my Mom said, "a case of a swooping Barred Owl."

You may recall, last spring I wrote an article mocking a fear mongering sign on a trail in Burnaby, B.C. The sign warned trail users of "swooping Barred Owls", and to "wear a hat to reduce chance of owls mistaking park users as a squirrel or other animal." Every time my Mom and I walk past that sign, we always laugh. Well it turns out, this Barred Owl got the last laugh.



Recent Bird Sightings:

This month was a whirlwind of reports, especially in November. Thanks to this month's reporters Marie and Craig, Mary Frey (via Carol Schulz), Pat Toth, Adele Freeland, Laura Lavington, and Dan Streiffert.

October 18th 2014 Marie and Craig's yard was visited by a **Pacific Wren**. Said Marie, "I've had many species frequent my yard this fall, but the Pacific Wren was a real surprise." The next week, while strolling through the park, they discovered a **Franklin's Gull**, and snapped a picture. Neat sightings, Marie and Craig!

November 5th 2014 Mary Frey spotted a real shocker at the Auburn Environmental Park in early November; a **Tropical Kingbird!** Mary observed it "moving around the tree tops, and it sailed for insects a few times." Carol Schulz had some comments "Our own Mary Frey found a code 5 (that's RARE) in King County, TROPICAL KINGBIRD at the Auburn Environment Park on Nov 5... Tropical Kingbirds are not from the NW, but in fall a few migrate along our coast. I have never heard of one in King County. Our huge fall storms with rain and wind blow in rare birds. Many rare birds are being found up at Neah Bay this fall after recent storms." A code 5 sighting is quite the feat Mary. Congratulations!

November 7th 2014 Pat Toth and Andy Waters had a **White-throated Sparrow** in their backyard in Seattle! The White-throated Sparrow is listed as Code 3. Normally, a White-throated Sparrow would be the bird sighting of the month; however, a Tropical Kingbird pulls rank this time. Awesome sighting Pat!

November 7th 2014 Adele Freeland and three others went birding in Dumas Bay, where they saw a (Continued on [page 9](#))



Barred Owl - Dan Streiffert

much bigger owl, and left the scene quickly.

Perhaps the most interesting owl experience was that of my Mom's on November 6th. She was walking with our dog Ella past a huge Spruce Tree when all of a sudden, she felt a huge back draft on her neck. At first, as she looked up, all she could see was a shadow of darkness. Then, as the stealthy bomber swooped away, she could see a pair of sharp talons and a threatening wingspan. Not a bat - definitely order Strigiform. What the owl was going for was my Mom's pony tail, or should we say squirrel tail, that was swinging out the back of her hat. Thankfully, the talons did not have hold of some small animal, or a chunk of my

In last year's Christmas Bird Count, we had six different owl species seen: Great Horned, Barred, Western Screech, Barn, Northern Saw-whet, and Short-eared! If you are looking for an exciting night time opportunity for the Christmas Bird Count, owling might be the adventure for you. Or, if you are just looking to spot some owls on your own, or with a friend, here are some hotspots for owls: Lake Fenwick in Kent, Soos Creek Trail, 272nd avenue and West Valley highway near the double barn, and West Hylebos Park.

Keep your eyes and ears peeled, and send me your reports!

Bio: Calen is a 15 year old birder. He enjoys birding around Lake Fenwick, Frager Road, and Boeing Ponds—especially with Charlie Wright. Calen is thrilled to revive Charlie's 'Seen and Heard'. When not birding, Calen can be seen flying up and down the ice at Kent Valley Ice Center

Field Trips by Michele Phiffer



Weekly Birdwalks at Nisqually

Wednesdays 8:00 am to Noon
Leader: Phil Kelley

Join Phil Kelley on his weekly bird walks as he counts the birds at Nisqually NWR. The group walks over to an area near the visitor's center to view the entry road estuary, and then takes the boardwalk/trail loop out to the Twin Barns, and the Nisqually overlook area. From there, the group walks the dike, and back to the Riparian Forest.

Some may choose to continue on the new boardwalk extension which goes out toward the mouth of McAlister Creek. It has benches and covered viewing areas.

The walk totals 2.0 miles roundtrip to the boardwalk extension. In winter the estuary boardwalk will add an additional 1 3/4 miles total, so the whole walk including the boardwalk extension is up to 3 3/4 miles.

Bring: Good walking shoes or boots, rain gear, water, snacks, and \$3 for entry fee unless you have a pass. Scopes are welcome.

Meet: At the Visitor's Center Pond Overlook.

Directions: Take I-5 south from Tacoma and exit to Nisqually NWR at exit 114. Take a right at the light.

Sign-up is not necessary. Call or email Phil Kelley if you have questions. Phil Kelley, Lacey, (360) 459 1499, scrubjay323@aol.com

Vashon Winter Water Birds

Wednesday, December 10
8:25 am to mid-afternoon
Limit 12
Leader: Ed Swan

We'll check out birds off the ferry aiming for several alcid species, all three kinds of cormorant and many types of ducks. We'll then head to Tramp and Quartermaster Harbors, the most reliable locations for Eared Grebe in King County and find more waterfowl and hopefully three to four species of loon. Time allowing, we'll go to Fisher Pond to see the freshwater ducks such as Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck and Hooded Merganser.

Meet: On the 8:25 am ferry leaving from Pt Defiance ferry dock.

Directions: From I-5: Take exit 132 (Hwy 16). Proceed west on Hwy 16 approximately 3 miles and exit on the 6th Avenue exit (signed Vashon ferry). Turn left onto 6th Avenue at the stop light. Turn right at the next stop light onto Hwy 163 (Pearl Street). Proceed north, approximately 3.5 miles, to the stop sign at the entrance to Pt. Defiance Park. Stay in the right lane and bear to the right. Do not enter the park. Auto toll plaza one block on right. Ferry terminal located at end of street. Parking to the left of terminal.

Sign-Up: When you sign up, give your phone and email and indicate whether you can drive or not. Then we'll figure out ahead of time who should park and where you should park and who will drive participants around the Island. Participants who park should plan to park first, get a ferry ticket second and meet up with the group on the ferry.

Sign up with Ed at:
edswan@centurytel.net

Kittitas County Birding in Winter

Sunday, December 14, 2014
6:30am to evening
Leaders - Roger Orness and Charlie Wright

Come enjoy a day of winter-season birding in central Washington. We will venture over Snoqualmie Pass and visit areas including Swauk Prairie and South Cle Elum along our route. Large numbers of raptors including Rough-legged Hawks and Prairie Falcons are seen wintering in the open, snow-covered fields of Kittitas Valley. Proceeding east we will reach the Columbia River at Vantage, where waterfowl are sometimes present in vast numbers. Some target species will include unusual loons, waterfowl, and American White Pelicans. Chukar are occasionally seen in the basalt outcroppings here.

Bring: Bring many layers of clothing for cold weather conditions, a lunch, and snacks. Scopes are welcome. Space is limited.

Meet: At 6:30am at Auburn Safeway at Auburn Way and Main St.

Directions: Take Hwy. 18 to Auburn and exit at Auburn Way. (Hwy 164). Turn north (right) on Auburn Way and drive three blocks north. Safeway sign and gas station will be on the left. Park in the Safeway lot just beyond the gas station and straight out from the Safeway door. We will meet and carpool from there.

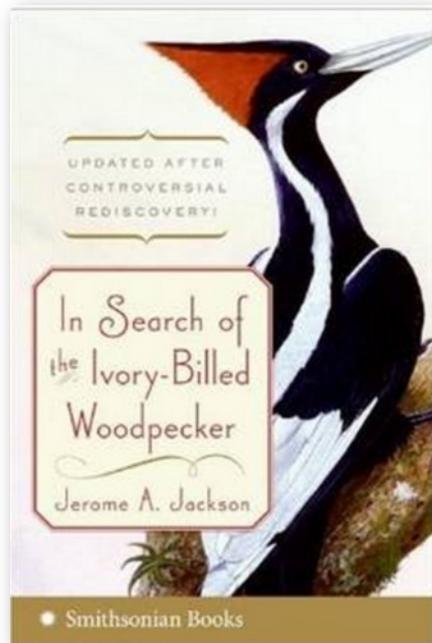
Sign-up: Contact Charlie Wright, cwright770@gmail.com, 253-468-4146. E-mail is preferred.

No field trips for November. So sorry!

Don't forget the link to the Tahoma Audubon
Field trips: fieldtrips@tahomaudubon.org

Book Reviews by Laura Lavington

Around last Christmas I watched *Ghost Bird*, an independent documentary about the 2004 “rediscovery” of the ivory-billed woodpecker in Arkansas (the library has the DVD). It is an interesting documentary, but it is obvious that its makers are skeptics. After I saw the documentary I wanted to know more, so over the next few months I read five books about ivory-billed woodpeckers. In the process, my opinion changed somewhat.



The ivory-billed woodpecker has been considered by most to be extinct since the 1940s, but officially it is still classified as critically endangered. There have been sightings since that time, but not much concrete proof has come forth. The largest North American woodpecker, the ivory-bill is in the same genus as the pileated woodpecker, and it was once found throughout the swamplands of the American southeast (with a subspecies in Cuba). For a handful of reasons the ivory-billed woodpecker steadily declined in numbers as European Americans began to inhabit the south. Logging, for one, had a great impact on the species, because each pair of birds needs a very large territory and relies upon mature forest. Unfortunately, conservationists of the early twentieth century were unable to protect the last great old-growth forests of the south. Until recently, it seemed that the logging of the Singer Tract in Louisiana in the 1930s and 40s was the end of the species.

I started my ivory-bill reading by checking-out *In Search of the Ivory-Billed*

Woodpecker by Jerome A. Jackson, a leading expert on woodpeckers who has himself spent weeks searching for the birds (the back of the book refers to him as being “recognized as the world’s expert on the ivory-billed woodpecker”). The book was written before the announcement of the 2004 Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s “rediscovery” in Arkansas and only touches on it in an epilogue. Jackson’s book is a great introduction to the species: he presents all the known scientific information along with a history of the study of and search for the species up to around 2004. If studying the Wikipedia article about ivory-bills leaves you wanting to know more, Jackson’s book is a great resource. If you want to read just one book about ivory-bills, and you want to know more about the birds themselves, this might be the best one.

Jim Tanner was the only person to really study the habits and behavior of ivory-bills, which he did as a graduate student in the 1930s in Louisiana’s Singer Tract (by which time the species was already rare). Almost everything that scientists know today about ivory-bills is thanks to Tanner. *Ghost Birds: Jim Tanner and the Quest for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, 1935-1941* by Stephen Lyn Bales recounts Tanner’s experiences and observations while studying the species in the field. Bales draws on Tanner’s journals to create a narrative as coherent as if the author had accompanied Tanner himself. By reading the book, I learned more about the birds, and I also found out what it was like to do fieldwork in the swamp in the days before modern technology.

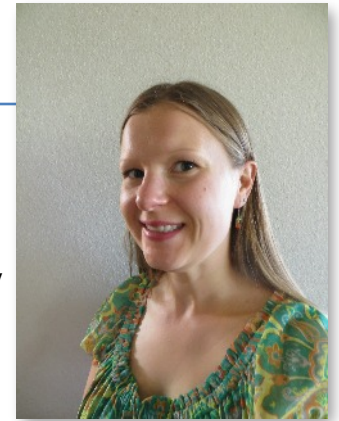
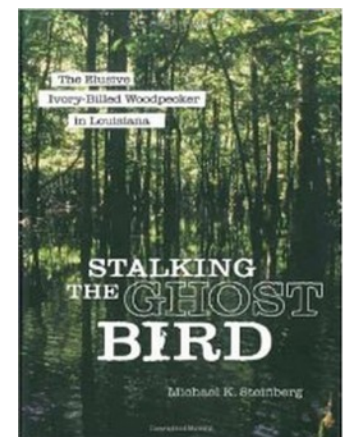
The Grail Bird: The Rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker by Tim Gallagher is a first-hand account of the 2004 Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s “rediscovery” of the bird told by one of the men who initiated the search. When I began the book I was somewhat skeptical about the 2004 search’s results (particularly due to the slim evidence that the search provided), but by the end the enthusiastic author had me seventy-five percent convinced that searchers really did see ivory-bills in Arkansas. The book is interesting if you want to know more about the search and its results, or if you are curious about what it is like to do fieldwork in the swamp.

A second ivory-bill search occurred in 2005 and 2006 in northern Florida, but it did not have the publicity associated with the 2004 Cornell search in Arkansas. *Ivorybill Hunters: The Search for Proof in a Flooded Wilderness* by Geoffrey E. Hill is

the story of that other search, which may have resulted in better evidence than the more famous Cornell “rediscovery” in Arkansas. Hill says in his preface that he “[focuses] primarily on the search and the searchers rather than on the woodpecker.” In some ways the book is similar to Gallagher’s book because it is an account of months of intensive bird-watching in the swamp.

Stalking the Ghost Bird: The Elusive Ivory-Billed Woodpecker in Louisiana by Michael K. Steinberg narrates the author’s investigations of pre-2008 ivory-bill sightings in Louisiana by local people. In this book, the author does not search for ivory-bills, but instead he interviews local people in Louisiana who believe that they have seen the birds. The book was interesting enough, but if you were only going to read one book about ivory-billed woodpeckers, I probably would not recommend this one (unless you are perhaps particularly interested in Louisiana).

Yes, you could just check out *Ghost Bird* from the library and watch it, but I think before you truly form an opinion about the continued existence of ivory-billed woodpeckers you should do a little reading. Don’t know which book to read? You could turn to Jim Tanner himself, and read his 1942 Audubon report, *The Ivory-Billed Woodpecker*, which is still in publication and available on Amazon (published under “James T. Tanner”). The book is currently under my bed, but I have not read it yet.



Mewsings from Millie

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

To feed or not to feed, that seems to be the question. There appears to be some confusion surrounding this popular hobby even though over 54 million folks across the country enjoy this activity.



Why wouldn't a person feed the birds? Do they worry that birds won't migrate? Are they concerned the birds will spread disease and the seeds of noxious weeds? Do they fret about rats and the birds getting fat? The answer is all of the above and I wondered about the truth of it all and did a little investigating.

According to some people who should know about these things like the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation, Bird Studies Canada, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, bird feeding is safe for birds and is a valuable hobby.

Data confirms that bird feeding does not have a negative impact on bird populations and

does not bring birds into an environment that is any more dangerous (such as predators and disease) than ones they face in the wild.

Being of feline persuasion, believe me people, rats are not a new problem. If bird feeding is done responsibly with appropriate products and techniques, rodent activity should not be a concern.

Bird feeding does not spread noxious weeds. In fact, the presence of noxious weed seeds in wild bird food violates state agricultural regulations. Bird seed is specifically inspected and tested for noxious weed seed.

Keeping the bird food buffet available will not stop birds from migrating. Migration results from

changes in day length which triggers the release of hormones that stimulate areas of a bird's brain and tells the bird it's time to go.

Speaking of migration, birds eat more before they begin their long journeys. Birds do not "overfeed" at feeders and become obese. They increase their weight and store fat to enable them to survive the trip. Could you fly from Seattle to South America without extra fuel? I think not!

Research studies on backyard birds such as Black-capped Chickadees have shown that they get only 20 - 25% of their diet from bird feeders. The rest of their diet comes from natural resources. Birds naturally seek a diverse diet and are not dependent on a single food source for their nutrition and survival.



Giving access to bird feeders benefits birds in many ways. They spend less time foraging for food and have more time to engage in activities that enhance their health and safety.

These activities include nest building, caring for and protecting chicks, preening to keep feathers in top flight condition, avoiding predators, and molting which takes tremendous energy.

After learning all of this, I'm not really sure what the fuss is all about. Bird feeding is good for the birds and creates enjoyable habitat for birds and people alike if done responsibly. Oh, and it makes for great "kitty-TV". Feed the birds!

Until next time,

Millie, the Muse of Mews

FREE DISCOVER PASSES FOR MEMBERS OF RAINIER AUDUBON SOCIETY

To support our state parks – and to boost membership - the local chapter of the Audubon Society, called the Rainier Audubon Society, is giving away free Discover Passes to any new member who joins Rainier Audubon during 2014.

All you have to do is come to a meeting, join up and get your free Discover Pass. The cost of joining is \$25.00/individual and \$30/family. The cost of a Discover Pass is normally \$35.00 dollars so you've just saved \$10.00 and you have a year's membership in the Audubon Society and a year's free access to all of the state parks in Washington.

Each Discover Pass can be used for any two vehicles you own. Just fill out two license plate numbers on the Pass, hang it from the rear view mirror of whichever car you're taking, and you're good to go for a full year of state park recreation.

The Rainier Audubon Society meets monthly at the United Methodist Church in Federal Way, and presents programs on all aspects of nature, birding, conservation, outdoor photography, and many other topics that adults and children who love the outdoors enjoy. For more information go to www.RainierAudubon.org.

Why Bats are Important

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

Bats provide us with many benefits. Bats are a "keystone species" which means their presence contributes to the diversity of life found within an ecosystem. Their extinction would cause huge changes in the life forms of all ecosystems around the world. In North America most bats are insectivores consuming vast quantities of insects nightly. Farmers recognize the benefits of having bats in the area of their crops. Having large bat populations decreases the need for farmers to use expensive pesticides.

The decline and possible extinction of bats would cost millions of dollars each year in insect control and have vast detrimental effects on our ecosystem.

Pollination is also carried out by many bats. Some fruits and plants depend exclusively on bats for their pollination and survival.

Pacific Northwest Bats

Washington is home to 16 species of bats. All bats in our state are classified as protected wildlife and cannot be hunted, trapped or killed.

Out of the 16 species, bats you are most likely to see include:

- Big Brown Bat
- Little Brown Bat
- Townsend Big-eared Bat
- Western Pipistrelle
- Hoary Bat
- Yuma Bat
- California Bat
- Keen's Bat
- Long-legged Bat
- Long-eared Bat
- Silver-haired Bat
- Spotted Bat

Fun Bat Facts

- bats are the only mammal capable of flight



- there are over 1000 kinds of bats in the world
- bats are not blind, they actually have very good eyesight
- bats do not make nests in your hair - bats roost
- bats do not attack people - they are very small and gentle
- bats play a very important role in our ecosystem
- insectivorous bats eat millions of insects in a night
- only one type of bat consumes blood - the Vampire Bat which is found only in South America, Central America and Mexico. Vampire Bats consume small amounts of animal blood, not human.
- provide natural habitat to help support the existence of bats
- eliminate the use of pesticides in your garden, farm or yard
- join a conservation organization that works to protect bats
- put up bat houses in your yard or on the side of your house
- install a light that attracts insects
- support legislation that protects natural habitat and wildlife
- plant more trees and bat friendly plants. Old snags and trees will provide homes. Plants that attract night-flying insects such as lilac, fox glove, sweet rocket, evening primrose, nicotiana, soapwort and herbs are great additions to your garden

Be a Bat Conservationist!

- educate yourself about bats and try to change any negative attitudes you may have about them
- teach others about the benefits of bats
- visit and support zoo programs that educate the public about bats

A JUNKY'S LONG TRIP - MARY FREY

My addiction started last year at the Western Field Ornithologists (WFO) annual conference in Olympia. It was the first time I had experienced multiple field trips at completely different locations in a few days. I birded in Nisqually, on Mount Rainier & in a boat. It was exhilarating & I was hooked. Since last year, I have attended the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival & two conferences including the recent WFO event in San Diego from October 8-12. I signed up as soon as registration opened & I luckily got onto all four of the field trips that looked interesting. San Diego was intriguing because it offered birds in & around the ocean & lakes but also desert & woodland.

My husband, Pieter, accompanied me because he wanted to go scuba diving. We arrived two days prior so I could become oriented to the area. The venue was perfectly located in the Liberty Station area, across from the Naval Training Center & near a 46 acre park & waterway. The next day, I birded this area & I was rewarded with nearly 30 species including Cassin's Kingbird, Marbled Godwit, Black-bellied Plover, Little Blue Heron, Long-billed Curlew & Black & Say's Phoebe. We took a short trip to a nearby beach where I saw birds on the shore with magnificent orange & black bills. I soon saw one flying & I exclaimed, "Look, it's skimming!" Pieter called, "They're Skimmers!" Beautiful Black Skimmers. We stayed for a week & the weather would remain clear & warm the entire time.

Camp Pendleton, north of San Diego, is a 400-square-mile military base featuring beaches, lakes, woodlands & desert. Our field guides were Tim Burr & Steve Ritt. Tim travels around the world recording bird songs & calls for Cornell Lab of Ornithology & other institutions. We were warned that because of the ongoing drought in Southern California, birds would not be as abundant. We started on a dry, dusty trail above Lake O'Neill. A Snowy Egret flew above the lake & soon we heard Wrentits in the scrubby bushes. California Gnatcatchers greeted us at several points & also a California Thrasher. California Towhees showed up, which are larger than the Spotted with an overall warm, brown color.

A second stop down a side road yielded great views of two Wrentits, which are famously difficult to see. Anna's & Allen's Hummingbirds buzzed us throughout the walk. We spent over two hours around Lake O'Neill which offered a rich variety of birds. Four Grebe species including my first Clark's were swimming, also several

ducks & sandpipers, a Great Egret foraged & American White Pelicans flew over in formation. Someone spied a shorebird that appeared smaller than the many Killdeer. Steve verified that it was a Semipalmated Plover, an unusual find. Our final stop was along the ocean beach. We were delighted when the first birds we saw were the adorable Snowy Plovers. Tim knew exactly where to look because they are so easily camouflaged. In all, I had 61 birds for the day which would prove to be the most of any of the four field trips.



Friday's field trip was to some coastal San Diego canyons & Whittier Johnson was with our group. I have birded with Whittier many times, primarily in Nisqually. I nicknamed him "Professor" because he's so knowledgeable. We spent nearly two hours in the Tecolote Canyon area which has a number of homes on the park's border. One home contained several bird feeders & so of course, we stopped to look. On the fence outside the home was a sign that read "Birders, please be mindful of the neighbors across the way when viewing birds in the channel & surrounding areas. Thank you" We heard Wrentits & our leader was determined to see one so playback was used repeatedly. I had seen them yesterday & because this was a half day trip, I thought it was a waste of time. I did see two new birds, though. A Nuttall's Woodpecker, with a beautiful white chest & a curious bird called Scaly-breasted Munia. This Asian native was once named Nutmeg Mannikin. Like many exotics held in aviaries, escapees established wild populations & the bird is now recognized by the American Birding Association. Our final stop was to Marian Bear Natural Park. For nearly an hour, we scoured the park & only came away with seven birds on our list. The drought certainly accounted for the poor numbers because most water sources were dry. For the day, I had 26 species.

Friday evening was the always engaging "Stump the Chumps" with bird photos. A

panel of experts sat in the front & each person took turns identifying birds based on fuzzy, sometimes cropped pictures. No one made a mistake! It was such a great learning experience as panelists explained details about each bird. Sometimes they knew the exact location where it was photographed. Jon Dunn was one of the experts & I had seen him before the challenge. I told him that I had birded with him last year on Mount Rainier. "Did we see anything good that day?" he asked. "Well," I laughed, "we did see some White-tailed Ptarmigan!"

Saturday was another half day trip to nearby Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery. Now the thought of traipsing over tombstones didn't exactly sit well with me but I knew it attracted great birds. Jon Dunn & Kimball Garrett's warbler ID class also arrived & our groups co-mingled all morning. There were a few notable birds including a pair of Acorn Woodpeckers, Black-and-white Warbler & Magnolia Warbler. I saw my first Lesser Goldfinches, too. Several people had walkie-talkies so people covered a lot of ground on the cemetery chasing birds. In all, I recorded 33 species for the outing.

"Stump the Chumps II" took place on Saturday evening. This was the audio portion & it included many teams. Most contained young birders under the age of thirteen. This was much more challenging than the visual ID & some groups failed miserably. But, again, great fun & I gained a little more birding wisdom.

Nearly fifty of us met in the hotel lobby early Sunday morning to walk over to the boat for the pelagic trip. Included in this group were Whittier Johnson & Shep Thorp, both wonderful birders. It would prove to be a very long day but one with surprises & great weather. In the harbor on our way out, we were flanked by hundreds of Heermann's & Western Gulls, Brown Pelicans & Double-Crested Cormorants. A pair of Brown Boobies was seen with gorgeous brown & white feathers, massive bills & nearly six foot wingspans. A warbler, nine miles from shore, was also seen! Another impressive bird, the Black-footed Albatross showed up to gather chum being thrown from the back. At one point, the crew put cod liver oil in the water, hoping to attract other birds besides the ever present gulls. About noon, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet flew into the wheelhouse! The captain caught it & it was put in a box for the remainder of the trip. It was later released in some bushes near the harbor. During the voyage, a six foot Mola Mola fish leaped out of the water (Continued on [page 9](#))

Bird Brainz

By Carley R.



Fredrick couldn't figure out why his December phone bill was so high.

Seen & Heard (Continued from [page 3](#))

multitude of bird species, ranging from **Eurasian** and **American Widgeon**, to a **Red-throated Loon**, and three **Common Loons**. During their birding escapade, the four watched ten **Common Mergansers**, "appearing to be trolling fish, necks extended with bills down in the water, swimming forward, in a long continuous line." Other highlights of the trip were a half dozen **Red-throated Grebes**, a pair of **Belted Kingfisher**, and a **Pileated Woodpecker** flying over the bay.

November 8th 2014 Laura Lavington had a **Western Scrub Jay** routinely visit her peanut feeder.

November 8th 2014 Dan Streiffert spotted a **Barred Owl** in the Soos Creek Trail. Great photo!

Mystery Bird of the Month

November 8th turned out to be the Seen and Heard sightings day of the year. This month's mystery bird has never been sighted in Washington State. Imagine the excitement when this bird was sighted in our own Rainier Audubon circle on 51st Ave, near 316th street in Auburn (Not far from the church where we hold our monthly meetings) by Doreen Deaver. Can you guess the bird? Here are the clues:

- I am known for my colorful big bill, which is half the size of my body.
- My body is about the size of a crow.
- I am native to southern Mexico, central America, northern South America, and the Caribbean.
- I make my nests in tree hollows excavated by woodpeckers. Though I wouldn't even think of carving a hole with my big bill!
- I belong to the Piciformes in the family Ramphastidae.
- I am the poster child for Kellogg's Fruit Loops Cereal.

It turns out, this sighting was not a code 5 (rare) sighting, but a code 6 (impossible/only domesticated) sighting, as it was only the neighbors pet bird who had decided it needed a break from its indoor routine, and had made a break for the Douglas Fir outside. I never did find out if the family managed to get it back inside.

Who am I?

Send your sightings/hearings to calenbirds@hotmail.com I love reading your reports!

A Junkies Long Trip (Continued from [page 8](#))

beside the boat. We also saw Humpbacks breaching & Common & White-sided Dolphins. For the day, I saw 29 species but there were others seen too.

When & where is my next fix? Certainly next June in Montana for the annual WFO conference. In a recent notice for the event we learn "history buffs will delight in viewing the Little Bighorn Battlefield where Custer saw his last Sharp-tailed Grouse"! Klamath Falls is hosting a festival in February & there is the Grays Harbor festival in the spring. I noticed there are a few more in Arizona & Texas looks promising too. Oh, there's Florida, California, Kansas.....

Answer: Toucan



“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

– The Lorax



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